

L I F E S T Y L E T R A V E L

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**Laura Kath ("Then and Now")** is a journalist/broadcaster and author of 16 non-fiction books, including *Elvis Presley's Graceland: The Official Guidebook* and the travel guide *Fun with the Family: Southern California*. Since 1989, she has owned Mariah Marketing, a Santa Barbara County-based consulting business specializing in unlocking the mysteries of communication. Along with travel and chocolate, Laura does admit to cravings for aebleskiver. See [www.TravelHubRadio.com/Escapade.htm](http://www.TravelHubRadio.com/Escapade.htm)



**Laura Stadler-Jensen ("Old World New World")**

is an American freelance journalist and photographer based in Copenhagen, Denmark. She writes about travel and culture for publications in the U.S. and Europe. After spending 10 years as a public relations professional in New York, Boston, and San Francisco, she traveled to Scandinavia, where she met her husband in Copenhagen in true fairy tale fashion. She's working on perfecting her Danish skills, and has taken on a new mission in life: "to educate Americans on the fact that people do not speak Dutch in Denmark."



**Chuck Graham ("Wallowing Room")**

is a freelance writer and photographer from Carpinteria, CA. His work has appeared in *Patagonia*, *BBC Wildlife*, *Trail Runner*, *Camping Life*, *Canoe & Kayak*, *Paddler*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Nature Photographer*, *The Surfer's Path*, *Willow Creek Press*, and other publications. He's also a lifeguard and a kayak guide at the Channel Islands National Park. [www.ChuckGrahamPhoto.com](http://www.ChuckGrahamPhoto.com)



**Virginia Hayes ("Madame's Magnum Opus")** is Curator of the Living Collection at Lotusland, a famed botanic garden in Montecito, California. Before coming to Lotusland in 1992, Virginia managed Santa Barbara Water Garden Nursery, specializing in aquatic plants, and owned a pond maintenance business. In 2002, she completed a Master's degree at UCSB, researching the unique floral characters of lotuses (*Nelumbo nucifera*) and their variation among wild populations. Virginia writes a popular column on gardening for the *Santa Barbara Independent* and regularly contributes to the *Lotusland Newsletter*, *Montecito Magazine*, *Pacific Horticulture Magazine* and other publications.



**Kym Balthazar ("Madame's Magnum Opus")**

Focusing on caricature and editorial illustration, Kym has been illustrating professionally since 2001. Her mixed media pieces utilize a variety of artistic tools, from the traditional to current technology. A graduate of the University of the Arts with a BFA in Illustration, she has won the Harriet Pauline Hughes Award for pen & ink illustration and received honorable mention in the William H. Ely Excellence in Illustration competition. A few of Kym's past clients include the *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Tikkun Magazine*, *XXL Magazine*, and *Selling Power Magazine*, to name a few. You can see more of Kym's work at [www.KymBalthazar.com](http://www.KymBalthazar.com).



**Bob Ecker ("Early Harvest")** is a Napa, California writer providing worldwide magazines and newspapers with powerful content on a wide range of subjects. He was the president of Bay Area Travel Writers, and has written about wine for such publications as *Wine Enthusiast*, *Decanter*, *Modern Luxury*, the *Boston Globe*, *New York Daily News*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, to name just a few.



# Old World New World

*The roots and modern branches of Solvang*



The unique character of Solvang—the Danish capital of America—charms visitors. Here, Copenhagen-based writer LAURA STADLER-JENSEN draws a parallel between the quaint hamlet and Mother Denmark, while closer to home, LAURA KATH reports on the present and looks to the future.

By Laura Stadler-Jensen  
Sidebar by Laura Kath

When the Danish-American settlers arrived from the Midwest back in the early 1900s, they were in search of sun, and they found it in Solvang. The town's name in Danish means "sunny meadow" or "fields," and likely represented more than the Dane's appreciation for a sunny day.



Perhaps it's significant because it was a place they could keep their old traditions alive and cultivate new ones on fresh soil.

Visitors to Solvang enjoy its charm and unique Danish character. It may seem as if you're walking down a street designed by Walt Disney, but this isn't the case. Many buildings are actually based on medieval Scandinavian and German architecture. The Danish founders of Solvang had a mission to build a place for cultural understanding, education, and worship when they built a combined Danish folk school and church. Today, this landmark building is home to the Bit O'Denmark Restaurant, and serves up Danish specialties in an original half-timber building based on quintessential Danish architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The first settlers of Solvang also built the Bethania Evangelical Lutheran Church, basing its design on the Danish architectural style of Bishop Grundtvig churches from the 14th century. Grundtvig may not be as famous as Hans Christian Andersen or Søren Kierkegaard, but his influence as a religious leader, hymn-writer, philosopher, and politician can still be felt in modern day Denmark. A good example is the Annisse Church, located about 30 miles north of Copenhagen and dating back to 1080. The white-washed Romanesque church is perched up on a hill along the edge of the Arresø Lake, Denmark's largest. It's graced by beautiful gardens that surround the on-site graveyard typical of most churches in Denmark.

Preservation of half-timber buildings, churches, and other historical buildings are a large part of what makes Denmark special. And Solvang has continued this tradition in the New World. Here are some other examples of the origins of Solvang, inspired by Mother Denmark.

### *Castles, Windmills, Winding Roads*

In Solvang, you can drive along Fredensborg Canyon Road to reach Fredensborg Way and see the white picket fenced-in historic Wulff windmill with a backdrop of the rolling hills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. In Denmark, Fredensborg is the name of the royal family's summer residence and home of the Danish Crown Prince Frederik, Crown Princess Mary, and their two children, Prince Christian and Princess Isabella. The Fredensborg Palace, which means "palace of peace," was originally



While Solvang has recently seen a surge of modernity, its Old World roots are clearly visible at every turn, from windmills to a customized Danish flag honoring the motherland.

built for King Frederik IV in 1720 and named to commemorate the second Nordic war.

Not far from Fredensborg Palace is the city of Elsinore, or "Helsingør" in Danish. It's located on the northeast coast of Denmark's main island Zealand, which faces Sweden. The city has become famous for being home to the Kronborg fortress, the setting for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Renaissance castle was originally a fort constructed for the purpose of collecting tolls from ships passing through the Øresund Straight and later turned into a castle by King Frederik II around 1600. Now the town serves as a busy port, with ferries docking day and night, and it is a favorite place among locals and tourists visiting Kronborg.

In Solvang, you can't miss the enormous windmill just outside the Kronborg Inn. Another windmill can be seen where homage to *Hamlet* was made on Hamlet Square. There are also references to both Kronborg and Elsinore in the street names of an outer lying neighborhood in Solvang: Just off Eucalyptus Drive north of downtown Solvang is Roskilde Road. South of downtown is Fjord Drive. Perhaps planners would have been better off putting these streets closer together, as the Roskilde Fjord in Denmark is one of the most important in Viking history; this is actually where they set sail so many years ago. Roskilde's historic importance is not only fjord waters and Vikings, it also served as the Danish capitol from the 11th to 15th centuries and has had a community there since prehistoric times. Roskilde in Denmark is also known for its Gothic cathedral, where Danish monarchs are laid to rest.

Perhaps what Roskilde is most known for nowadays is the annual Roskilde Music Festival. It's the largest outdoor summer music

festivals in northern Europe. The event attracts more than 100,000 people from all over the world, and many festival goers camp on the grounds. Since it often rains in the summer in Denmark, it makes for a rather muddy atmosphere.

### *The Little Mermaid - Den lille havfrue*

Last but not least is the Little Mermaid, one of Copenhagen's most well-known tourist attractions, and perhaps one of Solvang's, too. Just in front of the Denmark Square in Solvang, the Little Mermaid Fountain has a replica of the original sitting quaintly on her rock, just as she does in the Copenhagen Harbor. Thankfully, she hasn't received the same barbaric treatment as she has in Copenhagen: She's suffered three decapitations, an arm amputation, been blown off her rock by dynamite, and painted pink and red. Due to continual incidents, officials recently announced they may move the statue further out in the harbor.

The Little Mermaid Restaurant in Solvang, named after the famous fairy tale icon, offers traditional Danish lunch and *æbleskivers*, which means "apple slices" in Danish. These round pancake-like doughnuts sometimes contain a piece of apple in the middle, and are served with powdered sugar and raspberry



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marmalade. You can get them year-round in Solvang, but they are typically eaten only at Christmas time in Denmark.

From the Round Tower to Sladerbænken (gossip bench), signs of Denmark surround visitors to Solvang. Mortensen's Bakery, the Jule Hus (Christmas house) shop, the Gaveaeskens (gift box) European specialty shop, Rasmussen's Solvang Scandinavian boutique... The list goes on. And even though Solvang is closer in proximity to Disneyland, it will always be an authentic piece of New World history, claimed by Danes with ties to Denmark and held together by tradition, culture, and community. **Q**

## INFO

### LOCAL CULTURE

Elverhoj Museum of History and Art  
1624 Elverhoj Way, Solvang  
800.824.6444  
[www.Elverhoj.org](http://www.Elverhoj.org)

Danish Days Festival  
September 21-23  
[www.SolvangUSA.com](http://www.SolvangUSA.com)

### DETAILS

Santa Ynez Valley: [www.SYWA.com](http://www.SYWA.com)  
Solvang: [www.SolvangUSA.com](http://www.SolvangUSA.com)

### WINE COUNTRY

Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association  
For a guide to member vineyards, wineries, and tasting rooms, visit  
[www.SBCountyWines.com](http://www.SBCountyWines.com)

### WHERE TO STAY

Wine Valley Inn  
1564 Copenhagen Drive, Solvang  
800.824.6444  
[www.WineValleyInn.com](http://www.WineValleyInn.com)

### THE MOTHERLAND

Denmark travel facts: [www.VisitDenmark.com](http://www.VisitDenmark.com)